



Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

Byte-size: reading newsfeeds

Oxford University Computing Services



Agenda

- Newsfeeds: what are newsfeeds?
- Newsfeeds: how can I detect them?
- Newsfeeds: some examples
- Reading a newsfeed
- Reading a newsfeed: different ways
- Reading a newsfeed: using Firefox
- Reading a newsfeed: using Thunderbird
- Reading a newsfeed: using program/website
- Reading a newsfeed: from a web page
- Reading a newsfeed: from WebLearn
- Newsfeed formats
- Exercises



Newsfeeds: what are newsfeeds?

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- Establishing newsfeeds is a relatively new mechanism for delivering information.
- Essentially, a newsfeed is a collection of related items.
- For example, there might be newsfeeds for:
 - the latest news from Medical Sciences;
 - the current vacancies in the Economics Department;
 - this term's music events in Balliol College;
 - the latest world news from the BBC;
 - today's Radio 4 programmes.



Newsfeeds: how can I detect them?




Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- Many web sites are providing newsfeeds.
- For example, the BBC has several newsfeeds, one for UK News, one for World News,
- There are several icons that indicate a newsfeed is available from a web site, e.g.

 ,

 and



- If you click on a  or a , you will often be taken to a web page containing the code of the newsfeed.
- For example, go to:
`http://www.oss-watch.ac.uk/`
and click on a  icon.



Newsfeeds: some examples

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- The web page

`http:`

`//news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/help/3223484.stm`

provides links to some of the BBC's newsfeeds.

- Some of the web sites for departments at the University of Oxford provide access to a newsfeed, e.g.

`http://www.politics.ox.ac.uk/`

`http://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/`

- OUCS's web site also provides access to some newsfeeds. The web page

`http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/`

displays some of these newsfeeds.



Reading a newsfeed

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- There are many ways in which you can read a newsfeed.
- Usually it is a two stage process.
- First, you tell a newsfeed reader which newsfeeds you want to read.
- Then the newsfeed reader will do the hard work of getting the items of the newsfeeds and delivering the information to you.
- From time to time, the newsfeed reader will get new items.
- Although newsfeed readers work in different ways, the crucial idea is: you do not have to visit each of the websites yourself.



Reading a newsfeed: different ways

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

Here are some of the ways of reading a newsfeed:

- Some web browsers (e.g., Firefox) allow you to establish a *live bookmark* to the URL of a newsfeed.
- Although currently Internet Explorer does not have this facility, something similar will be available in IE 7.
- Some email clients (e.g., Thunderbird) allow you to get the items of a newsfeed delivered into the email client like ordinary messages.
- There are also various feedreader sites and programs, e.g., Bloglines, Google, NewsGator, NewzCrawler and Yahoo!
- If you know how to create web pages, you could provide a web page that displays the contents of a newsfeed.
- If you use WebLearn, you can set up a resource that is a *news feed display*.



Reading a newsfeed: using Firefox

- Some web browsers (e.g., Firefox) allow you to establish a *live bookmark* to the URL of a newsfeed.
- The details about how to do this are at:

`http:`

`//www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/rss/subscribing.xml`



Reading a newsfeed: using Thunderbird

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- Some email clients (e.g., Thunderbird) allow you to get the items of a newsfeed delivered into the email client like ordinary messages.
- The details about how to do this are at:
`http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/rss/subscribing.xml`



Reading a newsfeed: using Thunderbird

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

The screenshot shows the Thunderbird email client interface. The title bar reads "BBC News | News Front Page | UK Edition - Thunderbird". The menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Go, Message, Tools, and Help. The toolbar contains icons for Get Mail, Write, Address Book, Reply, Reply All, Forward, Delete, Junk, Print, and Stop. The left sidebar shows the Folders pane with a tree view including E-mail (Inbox (187), Sent, Deleted), News & Blogs (Deleted, BBC News | N...dition (29), Events test newsfeed (2), Future race...England (4), OSS Watch News Summary, RTS Talks (1)), and Local Folders (Unsent, Drafts, Sent, Deleted). The main pane shows a list of news items with columns for Subject, Sender, and Date. The selected item is "NI politicians return to Stormont" from "BBC News | News Front Page | UK Edition" at 07:45. Below the list, the message details for the selected item are shown: Subject: NI politicians return to Stormont, From: BBC News | News Front Page | UK Edition, Date: 07:45, and Website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4769945.stm. The body of the message contains the text: "Northern Ireland's politicians prepare to take their seats in the Assembly for the first time since October 2002." The status bar at the bottom right shows "Unread: 29" and "Total: 249".

Subject	Sender	Date
Four troops injured at Iraq camp	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	08:15
Strike hits Delhi health services	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	08:13
AstraZeneca to buy CAT for £702m	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	08:06
NI politicians return to Stormont	BBC News News Front Page UK Edition	07:45
Defence to begin in Saddam trial	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	07:43
British values classes considered	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	07:16
Double hospital 'downgrade' fear	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	06:53
Murder inquiry after victim dies	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	06:43
Brazil reels from deadly attacks	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	05:12
Java volcano activity increases	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	04:57
New US alligator killings feared	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	04:18
Justice system out of touch - PM	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	02:48
Crickets: England 'well set for win'	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	02:48
Sickness-leave levels 'dropping'	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	01:27
Optimism for manufacturing sector	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	00:45
BBC World Service hits new record	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	00:23
Muslim hardship under spotlight	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	00:10
Heart disease 'costing UK £29bn'	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	00:04
Rise in Blue Flags beach awards	BBC News News Front Page UK Edi...	00:04

Subject: NI politicians return to Stormont
From: [BBC News | News Front Page | UK Edition](#)
Date: 07:45
Website: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4769945.stm

Northern Ireland's politicians prepare to take their seats in the Assembly for the first time since October 2002.



Reading a newsfeed: using program/website

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

The screenshot shows a Mozilla Firefox browser window displaying the Google homepage. The address bar shows the URL <http://www.google.co.uk/g?hl=en>. The page features the Google logo, navigation links (Web, Images, Groups, News, Froogle, more), and a search bar. Below the search bar, there are several newsfeed links, each with an 'edit' link next to it:

- jobs in IT from www.jobs.ac.uk** edit
- Oxford Materials Jobs** edit
- Weather** edit
- BBC News | News Front Page | UK Edition** edit
- Oxford Saïd Business School: News** edit
- Events test newsfeed** edit
- OSS Watch Summary** edit
- Future races in North East England** edit
- RTS Talks** edit

The 'jobs in IT from www.jobs.ac.uk' link is expanded, showing a list of job titles: Computing Officer Systems Group, Project Manager, Applications Support Officer, and Assistive Technology Adviser. The 'Oxford Materials Jobs' link is also expanded, showing: Electron Microscopy Facility (2 Jobs), Personal Assistant to the Director of Studies, and Maintenance Technician (Plumbing). The 'Weather' section shows a forecast for Oxford: 8°C, Clear, with wind from the North at 2 km/h and 93% humidity. The 'Events test newsfeed' section shows links to helpdesk, time for an ice cream, return of Randy, anniv, and Randy's back. The 'RTS Talks' section shows links for NO TALK and NO TALK.



Reading a newsfeed: from a web page

- At the point in the web page where you want to output a newsfeed, include something like:

```
<script type="text/javascript"  
src="http://rssxpress.ukoln.ac.uk/lite/viewer/?  
rss=http://www.jobs.ac.uk/rss/disc/0700.xml">  
</script>
```

where all the text between `src="` and `>` should be on one line (with no spaces). Replace the URL

`http://www.jobs.ac.uk/rss/disc/0700.xml`
by the URL of the newsfeed that interests you.

- This uses a facility provided by UKOLN that first goes off to the website containing the newsfeed and then displays the news items as a web page.
- Here is a link to a web page containing the above code:

`http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/oxitems/
presentations/bytesize1/one.html`



Reading a newsfeed: from WebLearn

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- If you have a WebLearn account, you can read a newsfeed from WebLearn.
- `http://www.weblearn.ox.ac.uk/site/testarea/asuc/barry/`
- In WebLearn, to create a newsfeed resource, click on *Create a new resource here*.
- Then click on *News Feed Display*.
- Then enter some appropriate values in the *Name*, *Title* and *Description* boxes.
- In the *URL of Feed* box, you need to enter the URL of the newsfeed, e.g.:

```
http://www.jobs.ac.uk/rss/disc/0700.xml
```

- Then click on the *create now* button.
- That has created the resource.



Reading a newsfeed: from WebLearn (2)

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- The new resource can be viewed by clicking on *Back to menu of resources* and then scrolling to the bottom of this screen.



Reading a newsfeed: from WebLearn (3)

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- It is best to configure the resource to display the titles of each item as links.
- This can be done as follows.
 - Find the *Manage* link that is associated with the new resource.
 - Click on this link.
 - Then click on *Modify News Feed Display*.
 - Ensure that the box to *display summary entries, if available* is checked.
 - Ensure that the box to *display the titles as links* is checked.
 - Ensure that the box to *display the title of each entry* is checked.
 - Click on *Save*
 - And then revisit the menu of resources.



Newsfeed formats

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- As has already been mentioned, newsfeeds are coded using a markup language.
- Unfortunately, there are several markup languages that are often used.
- They include: RSS 1.0, RSS 2.0, Atom 0.3, Atom 1.0.
- You can see examples of the first three by clicking any item of *Director's Cut* from the OUCS main web page.
- And then clicking on each one of the RDF, RSS and Atom buttons (in the top right hand corner):

```
http://ramble.oucs.ox.ac.uk/blog/stuart/  
rdf.xml
```

```
http://ramble.oucs.ox.ac.uk/blog/stuart/  
rss.xml
```

```
http://ramble.oucs.ox.ac.uk/blog/stuart/  
atom.xml
```




Newsfeed formats (2)

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- Atom 1.0 was released in August 2005.
- It is probable that Atom 1.0 will become more dominant.
- Reasons are given at `http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/oxitems/formats/`
- Does it matter?
- Although it is useful to know that there are different formats, in many respects it is irrelevant.
- This is because most readers will read any of the formats.



Exercises

Byte-size:
reading
newsfeeds

- An exercise sheet is available at:
`http://www.oucs.ox.ac.uk/oxitems/
presentations/bytesize1/exercises.xml`